

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, MOPS, MILI, CB

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH GKR CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADER-
SHIP

I AM MEETING WITH THE COMBINED KHMER MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP THIS AFTERNOON (FEB 27) AT MY RESIDENCE IN AN EFFORT TO HEAL THE ACRIMONIOUS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM AND BOOST THEIR MORALE, SHOWING THEM THE WAY WHICH MAY EVENTUALLY LEAD TO AN ACCEPTABLE OUTCOME OF THE STRUGGLE. AN INITIAL EFFORT EARLIER THIS WEEK TO CONVENE SUCH A MEETING WAS THWARTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S REFUSAL TO SIT DOWN AT THE SAME TABLE WITH FANK COMMANDER SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ. FOLLOWING ARE THE POINTS I INTEND TO COVER WITH THE KHMER GROUP:

1. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING AT THIS STAGE IS FOR THE FANK AND THE GKR TO WORK TOGETHER AND DISPLAY A SENSE OF URGENCY, CONFIDENCE AND DETERMINATION TO RESIST THE ENEMY. IF THESE QUALITIES ARE NOT SHOWN, THE AMERICAN CONGRESS MAY TAKE THE POSITION THAT IT IS NOT WORTH WHILE TO VOTE ANY SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS FOR CAMBODIA.

2. WHAT REALLY MATTERS FROM THE MILITARY POINT OF VIEW IS TO KEEP PHNOM PENH ALIVE AND TO REOPEN THE LIFELINE TO PHNOM PENH AND THE PROVINCES, WHICH IS THE MEKONG.

3. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT SOME OF THE SMALLER PLACES MAY BE
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TEMPORARILY LOST OR ABANDONED TO THE ENEMY, SUCH AS MOUNG RUSSEI,

IN BATTAMBANG PROVINCE, AND OUDONG CITY. HOWEVER, MOST OF THE INTERVENTION UNITS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE PROVINCES AND ARE NOW ENGAGED IN DEFENDING PHNOM PENH AND RE-ESTABLISHING POSITIONS ON THE MEKONG. THIS EXPLAINS THE INABILITY OF SOME OF THE COMMANDERS IN THE PROVINCES TO PROTECT ALL OF THEIR TERRITORY. THE WAR WILL BE WON OR LOST IN PHNOM PENH AND ON THE MEKONG AND NOT AT SOME ISOLATED, DISTANT POINT IN THE PROVINCES.

4. THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR MILITARY OR CIVILIANS TO POINT FINGERS AT EACH OTHER AS TO WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT FAILURE. MOST OF THE FAILURES ARE NOT THE RESULT OF INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS, BUT OF THE SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY. THE MILITARY COULD BLAME THE CIVILIANS BECAUSE THERE ISN'T MORE MONEY BEING COLLECTED IN TAXES IN ORDER TO FINANCE THE WAR. THE CIVILIANS IN TURN COULD ACCUSE THE MILITARY THAT THE MONEY PLACED AT THEIR DISPOSAL IS NOT USED MORE EFFECTIVELY. WHATEVER DIFFERENCES THE TWO SIDES HAVE MUST BE BURIED. THIS IS A CRUCIAL TIME IN KHMER HISTORY, AND THEY MUST GET ON WITH THE WAR AND SHOW THE DETERMINATION OF BOTH CIVILIANS AND MILITARY TO OPPOSE THE COMMUNISTS.

5. THE MOST URGENT PROBLEM FACING THE NATION AT THIS TIME IS FINDING A WAY TO GET SEASONED SOLDIERS INTO THE COMBAT UNITS, SO THAT THEY CAN BE BROUGHT UP TO FULL STRENGTH. THE OPERATION ON THE MEKONG WILL ONLY SUCCEED IF SUFFICIENT SEASONED BATTALIONS ARE SENT TO OCCUPY THE SHORES AT THE CRITICAL CHOKE POINTS. I HAVE SUGGESTED TO THE MARSHAL A NUMBER OF IDEAS, AMONG THEM:

A) PROCLAMATION OF AN AMNESTY FOR DESERTERS FROM FANK. THEREAFTER, STRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW FOR THOSE DESERTERS WHO ARE CAUGHT.

B) EXTENDING THE UPPER LIMIT OF THE DRAFT AGE BEYOND 35 SO THAT OLDER SOLDIERS CAN TAKE ON SOME OF THE STATIC DEFENSE FUNCTIONS PRESENTLY CARRIED OUT BY TROOPS WHO COULD THEN BE TRANSFERRED TO COMBAT UNITS.

C) DRAFTING CIVIL SERVANTS AND STUDENTS FOR CERTAIN FUNCTIONS

SUCH AS NIGHT PATROLLING IN PHNOM PENH, WHICH WOULD FREE SOLDIERS
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DOING THIS TASK NOW FOR OTHER DUTIES.

D) RECRUITING KHMER KROM IN SOUTH VIETNAM TO BE USED IN THE LOWER MEKONG OR NEAR THE VIETNAMESE BORDER.

6. THE BATTLE OF THE MEKONG PROBABLY REMAINS THE KEY TO THE WAR. THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AGAIN IS FINDING WAYS TO REPLACE NAVY CRAFT WHICH HAVE BEEN SUNK OR DAMAGED SO THAT THE KHMER NAVY WILL

HAVE THE MEANS TO DO THE JOB. ALSO, THE EFFORTS TO COPE WITH THE MINES WHICH HAVE BEEN LAID BY THE ENEMY ARE MAKING PROGRESS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES OF CONVOYS REACHING PHNOMPENH.

7. THE SECOND LIFELINE IS THE AIRPORT OF POCHENTONG. THE AIRLIFT INITIATED BY THE US HAS BUILT UP AMMUNITION STOCKS TO A REASONABLE LEVEL. THE KHMER MILITARY DO NOT HAVE TO WORRY THAT THEY WILL BE RUNNING OUT OF ESSENTIAL AMMUNITION, SO LONG AS PRESENT RATES OF CONSUMPTION ARE NOT EXCEEDED. THE CIVILIAN AIRLIFT WHICH HAS STARTED TODAY WILL MAINTAIN RICE STOCKS AND CIVILIAN POL PRODUCTS SO THAT THE KHMER CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES DO NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT A DEPLETION OF ESSENTIAL FOOD SUPPLIES. IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THIS SECONDARY LIFELINE, THAT IS, POCHENTONG, THE KHMER MILITARY MUST ASSURE SAFETY OF THE AIRPORT BY PUSHING THE ENEMY FURTHER AWAY SO THAT ROCKETS DO NOT IMPACT NEAR OR AROUND THE AIRFIELD.

8. ANOTHER CLEAR INDICATION OF AMERICAN DETERMINATION TO FULFILL ITS OBLIGATION TO THE KHMER REPUBLIC IS THE VISIT OF AMERICAN LEGISLATORS TO PHNOM PENH TOWARD THE END OF THIS WEEK, NOW EXPECTED FOR SATURDAY, THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW. IT IS HOPED THAT THEY WILL SEE THE URGENT NEED FOR SUPPLEMENTAL AMERICAN ASSISTANCE SO THAT THE KHMER MILITARY WILL HAVE THE AMMUNITION TO DEFEND THE COUNTRY AND SO THAT THE CIVILIAN POPULATION WILL BE FED. THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE SECRETARIES OF STATE AND DEFENSE HAVE APPEALED DIRECTLY TO THE CONGRESS TO PROVIDE THIS SUPPLEMENTAL ASSISTANCE. UNLESS THESE FUNDS ARE FORTHCOMING, THE FUTURE OF THE REPUBLIC IS GLOOMY INDEED.

9. ONCE THE KHMERS HAVE PROVEN AGAIN THEIR ABILITY TO THWART THE ENEMY'S EFFORT TO IMPOSE ITS WILL MILITARILY, AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS RENEWED ITS SIGNIFICANT MATERIAL SUPPORT TO THE GKR, CONDITIONS MAY BE SUFFICIENTLY IMPROVED SO THAT THE OTHER SIDE
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MAY BE WILLING TO DISCUSS SOME POLITICAL SETTLEMENT TO THE CONFLICT.
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